

NATIVE PLANT SEMINAR

The Missouri Department of Conservation and the Cape County Master Gardeners are partnering to bring a native plant seminar to the nature center. Landscaping with native plant species provides urban habitat for a diversity of wildlife and offers alternatives to the traditional water-and chemical-dependent manicured lawns. There will be a series of guest speakers advocating the benefits of incorporating native plants into your landscape. Call to receive a flier listing the day's activities. Ages 15 – adult.

Seminar registration begins February 1.

There is no registration fee.



Saturday, March 4
8:30AM-3:00PM

Tupelo Times
Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus
2289 County Park Drive
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
Phone: 573-290-5218
<<http://www.missouriconservation.org>>

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The Newsletter of the **Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus** Nature Center

“Scaling the Obstacles of Captive Care”

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the chance to see wildlife in its natural habitat. While I enjoy interacting with Nature Center guests, the real draw to this profession is the animals themselves. When I was young, my grandfather and I would sit outside and watch snakes slither through the grass; we enjoyed turtles basking in the sunlight and listened quietly as bullfrogs bellowed their familiar song. My favorite animals have always been those that slither, creep or crawl—those with a bad reputation!

I have had the opportunity both at work and at my home to keep many of these under appreciated treasures of Missouri. Keeping animals like snakes, turtles and frogs can be very rewarding and educational. However, unlike many traditional pets, they can offer a challenge that many individuals can't meet. Careful consideration of the specific needs must occur before selecting your new pet. This is important regardless if you purchase an animal from a pet store or remove it from the wild. Another issue to consider before selecting an animal is if it is legal to own in this state. To find information on animal regulations, please refer to the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* or contact your County Conservation Agent.

Most of the species of reptiles and amphibians of Missouri eat meat, and in many cases, living animals. Not only can this be a problem for the hobbyists, it is often difficult to acquire food during colder months. Another difficulty for inexperienced animal keepers is creating a habitat suitable for the animal. These animals can thrive in captivity but only if you make their enclosures as close to their natural dwellings as possible. Natural items, temperature and humidity levels are a few as-

pects that need to be considered. A free guide to help you handle amphibian and reptile care is available through the Department of Conservation.

One aspect that is rarely thought of is the life expectancy of many of these animals. For example, some snakes can live to be older than 15 years and many turtles can grow as old as 50 years or more. A better option to permanently housing a reptile or amphibian is observing it for a couple of weeks and releasing it. An animal of this sort may have irreversible harm caused if kept for more than two or three weeks and its return to the wild could be fatal. The specimen must however be returned to the exact location of its capture. Many species of turtles, such as box turtles, spend their entire life in the same five acres and would be lost if relocated. Several amphibian species return to the same pond to lay eggs each year. For these reasons and because of possible diseases they may contract during captivity, any reptile or amphibian kept for more than a month, should be considered yours for life. By displacing these species, you may cause long-term effects on the entire population. Lastly, timing is everything! If a species is released too late in the season, usually after September, its death is eminent.

Reptiles and amphibians are striking creatures and an asset to Missouri outdoors. The removal of these individuals can cause serious harm not only to that one animal but to the entire population. This idea reminds me of what my grandfather used to tell me. He would say, “Wild animals are wild for a reason!” I was too young to realize what he meant, but looking back he truly understood the important things in life.

- Jeremy Soucy

Meet the Naturalists...

These two new staff members bring in a variety of talents. Scott Kelley (right) and Julie Beardslee (left) began December 1 as hourly naturalists. Their primary responsibilities include programming for children of all ages as well as leading adult programs. Other responsibilities include animal care, researching program topics, trail development, creating signs, selling items in the Nature Shop, and assisting with visitor's needs. Julie comes to us with experience in early childhood and daycare as well as a seasonal naturalist from Trail of Tears State Park. She loves small children and brings joy to the interpretive team. She is completing her degree in Biology Education from Southeast Missouri State University. Scott has worked for the Department of Conservation alongside a Natural History Biologist for a number of years. He has a great knowledge of southeast Missouri's natural history, is an accomplished artist and nature photographer, and enjoys teaching youth and adults about natural diversity and outdoor skills in this region. Whether you see Scott or Julie at the front desk, in a program, or a special event, let them know how much you appreciate them and their service at the nature center.



Volunteer Spotlight

Our new Nature Center Volunteers have been quite busy becoming more familiar with the Department of Conservation and the Nature Center's many opportunities and features. These 17 incredible people help the nature center accomplish much more for the public and have been a joy to have here. Special mention goes to Scott Kelley, Kelly Hughes, Katie Derr, Michelle Moen, and Bob Shirley for their hard work designing, painting, and trimming out the Missouri Department of Conservation's Christmas light display in the Cape County Park. The sign was a joy for people to see and provided a way for the Department staff and volunteers to wish you all a wonderful holiday season.

Thank You

Donations of Time, Material, and Service

John "Doc" Yallaly: Unique cottontail mount

Cape Girardeau County Rotary Club: Trees & planting service

Ms. Karlyle Christian-Ritter in memory of Dr. John Ritter: Exhibit mounts

Those purchasing paving stones for the Conservation Campus walkway:

Duane Buchanan Mike Buchanan Joan L. Griffaw

Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center is located in North Cape Girardeau County Park off Kingshighway just east of Interstate 55 at exit 99. The building is open Tuesday through Saturday 8am to 5pm and Sunday noon to 5pm and is closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The area is open daily from sunrise to 10pm in accordance with the Cape Girardeau County Park Rules and Regulations.

Nature center grounds and trails are closed to pets, horses, hunting, collecting, littering, fires, and alcoholic beverages. The trails are also closed to bicycles, jogging, in-line skates, skateboards, scooters, and motorized vehicles.

The Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center is operated through hunting and fishing license revenues and through the 1/8% "Design for Conservation" sales tax. There is no admission charge.

Phone: 573/290-5218; Fax: 573/290-5566; Internet: www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/cape

Educators' Niche

Please come in and visit our Educator Resource Room. There is a lot of great information and resources that are available to take with you...for free. We have department videos available for screening. These videos can then be borrowed free of charge by using the Media Loan List. We will also have activities and lesson plans on hand that you can take. These activities cover a wide range of subjects and grade levels. No matter what you're teaching you can find something here to accentuate your curriculum. We are constantly adding to and developing our Educator Resource Room. Please come in, have a look, and help yourself to conservation information and lesson plans. Learn about Discovery Trunks and preview videos that can be borrowed. Just ask at the front desk and the Educator Resource Room will be at your disposal.

Upcoming Workshops!

Mammals
Friday, March 24
Saturday, March 25

Mammals are some of the most popular animals on the planet. This course will illuminate some of the unique characteristics that make these animals interesting. This course will include information on: identification, habitats, and dilemmas facing these animals. Participants will also learn how to incorporate this information into their existing curricula. This is a 1-credit course through Southeast Missouri State University. It will be held at the Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus on March 24 and 25, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you have any questions about the course, please contact Bridget Jackson at 573-290-5858 ext. 300. To register for the class, please contact the SEMO Office of Extended and Continuing Education at 573-986-6879.

The Nature Shop

The Nature Shop features a variety of nature-related books, videos/DVDs, and resources to increase awareness and knowledge of conservation and the outdoors.

Special monthly discounts ... **20% Off**
(Conservation Heritage Card discounts do not apply)

FEBRUARY

Where Eagles Soar DVD

This movie tells not only how these magnificent birds became endangered in Missouri, but how they've been brought back to begin nesting and raising eaglets in this state. Whether they're swooping to catch fish, perched and preening, or feeding their young, the bald eagles in this MDC movie will delight you.

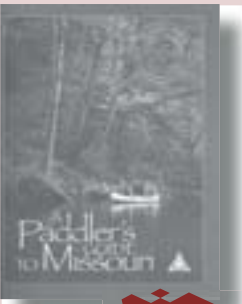


Discounted price:
\$8.00 plus tax

MARCH

A Paddler's Guide to Missouri

This book is designed to make river trips more pleasant, convenient and safe for the family. Missouri has many miles of rivers, and floating them is a peaceful way to enjoy the outdoors. Everything from planning your trip to the equipment you will need is in this handy guide.



Discounted price:
\$4.80 plus tax

featuring 58
streams to
canoe and kayak

WHAT IS A DISCOVERY TRUNK?

A Discovery Trunk is a collection of materials that may be checked out by innovative teachers and youth leaders. These trunks are a great way to compliment thematic units or as an intriguing way to cross disciplines.

- There is no fee for using the trunks.
- Each trunk may be checked out for two weeks.
- The trunks contain books, hands-on activities, natural items, videos, CD's, posters, curriculum guides, and more. Activities and materials range from early childhood to secondary level.
- Many of the activities are correlated with the Show-Me-Standards.
- We ask that trunks be returned in good condition and on time for the next educator.

Featured Discovery Trunk: REPTILE & AMPHIBIAN TRUNK

They're creepy, crawly, and scary, or are they? Learn more about some of the most misunderstood animals in our State. This trunk can help teach the value of reptiles and amphibians to your students. Contents include: books, video & audio tapes, activities, puppets, and more. Maybe they're not as frightening as you thought. This trunk is applicable for grades K – high school.